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The rise and fall of the ‘inner city’: race, space and urban policy in postwar England

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ABSTRACT

In postwar England, the ‘inner city’ has loomed large in urban discourse and policy, serving as an important site through which ‘race’ has been rendered socially and spatially meaningful. Drawing on insights from history, geography and sociology, this paper traces the material and symbolic processes through which the ‘inner city’ has been the subject and object of socio-political knowledge and action. The article examines what shifting understandings of the ‘inner city’ and related policy responses reveal about the racialisation of space and bodies, and the role of the state in rationalising and enacting specific urban imaginings and interventions. In historicising dominant conceptions of the ‘inner city’, we identify three periods revealing key transformations within this formation: firstly, we consider how the idea operated as a spectre, in which the American ‘ghetto’ was seen as a predictor of ‘race relations’; secondly, we contend that during the 1970s and 1980s, the ‘inner city’ came to be ‘territorialised’ as a pathological, racialised space subject to particular modes of institutional regulation; finally, we examine the relative fragmentation of the ‘inner city’ in recent decades, through urban regeneration and changes in the spatialisation of ‘race’ and ethnicity.

KEYWORDS

Race; space; ‘inner city’; urban; policy

‘Race’, space and the ‘inner city’

The ‘inner city’ does not represent a singular, unambiguous set of issues; it is polymorphic, bringing together a range of concerns. Alongside notions of decline, crime, disorder, poverty and economic stagnation, ‘race’ has been *the* defining feature of the ‘inner city’ (Gilroy 1987; Keith 2005; Millington 2011). This is evident in how it is multiracial and multi-ethnic places such as Brixton, Moss Side, Toxteth and Handsworth that have represented archetypal ‘inner city’ areas. The ‘inner city’ has existed as a racialised space acting as shorthand for a range of socio-political contestations sutured by ‘race’, animating postwar political discourse and urban policy. It has provided a medium through which national ‘crisis’ has been articulated, and the presence of racialised ‘others’ understood (Hall et al. [1978] 2013; Smith 1989). Gilroy suggests that ‘Britain’s “race” politics are quite inconceivable away from the context of the inner-city’ (1987, 311). Shifting political

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approaches towards the ‘inner city’, therefore, ‘offer a particularly interesting lens through which to examine the spatial politics of race’ (Keith 2005, 96). This paper is part of a Special Issue that offers new insights into the relationships between ethnicity and place (Finney et al. 2018). This article is concerned with the work the ‘inner city’ has performed politically in the postwar nation, and what it reveals about the shifting relationships between race, urban space and the state.

The power of the ‘inner city’ lies in its charged set of imaginings and inherently political character; it does not simply name an urban locale but provides a spatial fixing for social, cultural and political anxieties. It has operated as a schema whereby *actual and imagined* geographies of race and ethnicity are produced and comprehended; it references features of the urban – such as inequalities and racialised demography – but employs particular techniques of representation in doing so. It is not transparent but always made up of ‘the abstract and the empirical’ (Keith 2005, 71). Emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, informed by ideas of the American ‘ghetto’, the ‘inner city’ has offered a framing device through which the minority ethnic presence and its purported ‘problems’ have been articulated and understood. In this sense, it exists as a ‘politically constructed problem’ (Smith 1993), structuring how specific spaces are viewed, as well as reciprocally (re-) constructing bodies associated with these spaces as ‘racially’ distinct. It is both the ‘urban sites and urban sights’ that ‘work together to produce and sustain racial meanings’ (Lipsitz 2011, 13). This reflects ‘the spatial dimensions of race making’ and the ‘spatial character of race’ (Knowles 2003, 78).

The ‘inner city’ operates not simply as a representational device but as a subject of *and* object for forms of socio-political knowledge and institutional action. In postwar England, it has shaped urban policy across domains of housing, education, employment and policing. Renderings of the ‘inner city’ diagnose sets of problems, proposing specific solutions, opening and foreclosing modes of representation and action. In doing this, a selective vision is presented, producing specific (in-)visibilities that promote or occlude particular bodies, practices and issues. The features affixed to the ‘inner city’ and the actions they inform are revealing of the social, cultural and political contexts within which they are made and the processes of power at play; changing ‘institutional rationalities’ towards the ‘inner city’ point to, ‘the manner in which institutions at the heart of governmentality figure the racial imagination’ (Keith 2005, 96).

Following Mavrommatis (2010), we employ a ‘racial archaeology of space’, identifying key transformations in the (re-) making of the ‘inner city’. Also, informed by Millington’s periodisation, examining changes in this formation explicates, ‘the dis/continuities between “types” of inner city ... [and] the organizing role played by “race”’ (2012b, 7). Its meanings have evolved significantly, and in identifying distinct periods within formations of the ‘inner city’, the article contributes to understandings of the mutual imbrication of race and space, locating the key factors informing such shifts. Changing capital flows, urban cultures, political and institutional rationalities, and racial demography, all produce varying approaches to the ‘inner city’. Though attentive to the problems of historical periodisation – in terms of the danger of suppressing heterogeneity and continuities within and between the periods identified – we use it as a heuristic device. The periods delineated do not mark complete displacements of previous socio-political understandings of the ‘inner city’, but key moves in the directions and orientation of the nation’s race-space politics. We see particular benefits of this approach: firstly,

while ‘inner cities’ are shaped by national level discourses and processes but also specific local histories (Fraser 1996; Keith 1993), at a general level, the idea of the ‘inner city’ has operated as an important device for national policy and political framings of race, ethnicity and space; secondly, it restores a necessary historical dimension to such inquiries, avoiding the tendency Inglis (2014) observes within sociology towards ‘presentism’, by attempting to capture the complex historical processes through which the social and spatial are produced. This sensibility enables us to trace the morphing relationship between race, state and space, revealing how shifting demographic, spatial and cultural processes are worked out within political discourse and policy; what Keith terms ‘the genealogy of vocabularies of the urban’ and ‘the spatially concrete forms of race formation’ (2005, 34).

The article proceeds through the identification of three distinct periods in the ‘archaeology’ of the ‘inner city’: firstly, it is argued that from 1945 to the late 1960s, its spectre acted as a predictor of ‘race relations’ unless attempts to assimilate black immigrants or to control their entry were pursued; secondly, we consider how during the 1970s and 1980s the ‘inner city’ came to be ‘territorialised’ as a pathological, racialised space, subject to new forms of intervention and representation; finally, we examine its diminishing political salience in recent decades, as the material and symbolic revalorisation of parts of the ‘inner city’, as well as the shifting geographies of race and ethnicity, have marked a reconfiguration, lessening its socio-political salience.

The spectre of the ‘inner city’ (1940s–1960s)

The immediate postwar period saw the settlement of immigrants from the New Commonwealth and attendant anxieties about this presence. While the 1948 British Nationality Act did not discriminate against the entry of ‘colonial subjects’ from across Empire and Commonwealth, the arrival of ‘black immigrants’ sparked intense political concern. Contrary to the view this was a period of a ‘laissez-faire’ approach to ‘race’ politics, ‘from a very early stage in the postwar period the notion that black immigrants represented a real or potential problem took root in both the official mind and in popular political debate’ (Solomos 1988, 30–31). Although those arriving were British citizens, racialised imaginaries of ‘black immigrants’ structured perceptions of their arrival, shaped by Empire but also the racial consternation present within the pre-war nation, evident in the legislative action taken to restrict the entry and movement of black seamen in port cities such as Bristol, Cardiff and Liverpool.

These racialised anxieties quickly assumed a spatial character. The settlement of immigrants from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent was directed by economic disadvantage, racism and exclusion as landlords, lenders, and national and local authorities limited access to housing (Rex and Moore 1967; Smith 1989). The majority of immigrants were forced into poor quality housing, primarily, often in areas identified for slum clearance. Patterns of settlement were concentrated in the larger industrial cities, ‘characterised by housing deprivation, inner city concentration, ethnic segregation and racialised inequality’ (Phillips and Harrison 2010, 222). The concentration of black immigrants was quickly identified as a political ‘problem’, with areas of black settlement viewed as sites of poverty, decay, poor health, crime and vice (Carter, Harris, and Joshi 1987; Gilroy 1987; Smith 1989). A report produced in 1954 by the Liverpool branch of the Conservative

Commonwealth Association, outlined the perceived impacts of ‘coloured settlement’. The city’s ‘new Harlem’ was described as occupied by ‘coloured immigrants who exist in conditions of upmost squalor’, where ‘vice and crime are rampant and social responsibilities are largely ignored’, manifest in ‘the large numbers of adults ... in receipt of unemployment benefit or National Assistance’ (cited in Carter, Harris, and Joshi 1987, 62–63). As Smith (1993, 134) states, ‘increasingly, attention settled on the so-called inner city and on the bundle of social, economic and environmental concerns so conveniently indexed by “ethnic mix” or “racial concentration”’.

Areas of black settlement during this period can be seen as emergent ‘minoritised space’. Laguerre argues ‘space is a central phenomenon in explaining the minority question because space is implicit in the very notion of minority, which implies positioning, relations, hierarchy, mobility, displacement, difference, and segregation’ (1999, 8). The concentration of black immigrants into inner areas of cities was central to the racialisation of this group, as racialised bodies became associated with racialised and stigmatised spaces, reflective of the simultaneous process of the ‘racialisation of space and spatialisation of race’ (Lipsitz 2011, 20). Settlement in deprived urban areas was taken as evidence of the cultural pathologies and ‘otherness’ of black immigrants and minorities were largely defined by the assumed features of their spatial location, constructed not as victims of systemic racism and inequalities, but as ‘perpetrators of decay’ (Smith 1989, 119). Within popular political discourse, ‘Black people not only created slums, it was argued, but these “new Harlems” had their provenance in the “racial character” of the inhabitants’ (Carter, Harris, and Joshi 1987, 63).

Spatial concentration was also associated with threats to assimilation, with the residential segregation of black communities taken as a manifestation of their imputed difference from the majority white population. Here, it acts as, ‘an index of the attitudes, values, behavioural inclinations and social norms of the kinds of people who are assumed to live in particular “black” or “white”, inner city or suburban, neighborhoods’ (Smith 1993, 133). As Laguerre observes, ‘The positioning of the “other” as a minority subject implies the distancing that space materialises’. For him, ‘The “other” cannot be minoritised unless he/she is situated or located in a social position apart from that of the majority’ (1999, 8). Spatial distance purportedly conferred actual ‘racial’ difference and is central to its reproduction. Smith argues that, ‘Once the “black inner city” is isolated in this way, the image of racial segregation is mustered as spurious evidence of the supposedly natural origins of social (“racial”) differentiation’ (1993, 133). This is despite the fact that ‘segregation must also be understood as a product, and an expression, of British racism’ (128). The ‘minoritisation’ of space facilitated the emergence of a political vision shaping how ‘inner city’ areas and their inhabitants were viewed.

If spatial concentration and separation were central to the emergence of the ‘inner city’ as the 1960s progressed, the idea of the American ‘ghetto’ was generative for its development as an organising concept. The 1958 riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill marked the juncture at which black immigration, ‘became even more politicised and racialised’, interpreted as resulting from ‘the problems caused by “too many coloured immigrants” in relation to housing, employment and crime’ (Small and Solomos 2006, 239). This hastened the parallels drawn with the American ‘ghetto’ as, ‘The spectre of recreating New York’s Harlem at the heart of urban Britain haunted political discourse as the 1950s drew to a close’ (Smith 1993, 132). While concentration had been envisaged as a transient phase,

to be overcome through the ‘natural’ process of assimilation, its apparently intractable nature was taken as evidence of the inassimilable features of the black population. During the 1960s, ‘a new racial awareness drew attention to the enduring black presence in “white man’s country” ... [as] portraying segregation as a passing phase in immigration history crystallized into a vision of ghettoisation on British soil’ (Smith 1989, 118). By the mid-1960s, fears escalated that riots in US cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York might pre-empt similar racial conflict in Britain (Keith 2005; Smith 1989; Solomos 1988).

The most significant usage of such comparisons was by Enoch Powell in his infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech in April 1968. Informed by a letter he had apparently received from one of his Wolverhampton constituents – an elderly white widow – Powell located his account within the ‘inner city’. The purported marginalisation and potential racial subordination of the ‘indigenous’ population was invoked through black intrusions into white neighbourhoods and the relegation of the ‘native’ population through, ‘the transformation of whole areas ... into alien territory’ (cited in Smith 1989, 120). As Gilroy describes, within Powell’s speech, his lone female protagonist symbolises the nation, ‘trapped and alone in the inner city. She is surrounded by blacks whose very blackness expresses not only the immediate threat they pose but the bleak inhumanity of urban decay’ (1987, 106). Through reference to the American ‘ghetto’, Powell reasserted the spatial nature of the ‘black’ problem and, ‘the territorial challenge issued by post-war immigration’ (Smith 1989, 120).

Interestingly, Powell’s speech presented such transformations as a preventable ‘evil’; the advent of the ‘ghetto’ was impending – a haunting spectre rather than something fully realised. However, Powell captured and curated something of a changing mood, where it was suggested more direct intervention in ‘inner cities’ was required. Prior to this period, government had focused on a combination of immigration controls and policies aimed at assisting assimilation. Section 11 provisioning of the 1966 Local Government Act saw areas exhibiting larger black immigrant populations granted resources to aid ‘adjustment’ in the areas of education, health and language provision (Small and Solomos 2006). In urban policy, despite the concerns identified, the national government had pursued a relatively non-interventionist approach, as it was felt that the ‘normal’ operations of the housing market would encourage assimilation (Smith 1989, 113). However, it became apparent this was not occurring, largely as a result of racially exclusionary practices. Slum clearances which began in 1930 favoured white populations through the prioritisation of specific areas and eligibility criterion for social housing excluded newer ‘immigrants’, meaning black communities became further concentrated in poorer inner urban areas (Smith 1989). As a result, policy assumed a more interventionist stance to resist the feared materialisation of the ‘ghetto’ (Keith 2005; Smith 1989). In 1969, the Cullingworth Committee called for the forced dispersal of ‘immigrants’, and such ideas informed responses to the arrival of Ugandan Asians in the early 1970s. Birmingham council infamously operated its own dispersal programme between 1968 and 1975 (Phillips and Harrison 2010). However, in reality such policies achieved little in terms of the spatial redistribution of black immigrants (Smith 1989).

More significant was the introduction of the Urban Programme by the Labour Government in 1968, which directed resources towards deprived urban areas of ‘special need’, often containing higher proportions of black and minority ethnic residents (Harding and Nevin 2015, 8–9; Rees and Lambert 1985, 128). The 1969 Housing Act marked a

shift away from clearance and dispersal, instead focusing on the renewal of targeted ‘inner’ urban areas. At a time when the maturation of the ‘black’ population meant that communities were likely to benefit from future programmes of relocation due to increased eligibility, the government – informed by economic concerns and the resistance of the white electorate to racial dispersal – favoured an approach that instead channelled resources into the improvement of poor urban areas (Phillips and Harrison 2010; Smith 1989). This consolidated the concentration of black communities in the ‘inner city’ leading Rex to identify such policy shifts as ‘the basis for ghetto formation’ (cited in Smith 1989, 56–57). For Smith, the late 1960s witnessed therefore the emergence of ‘a series of distinctively “inner city” policies’ (1989, 67), as the ‘inner city’ was ceasing to be viewed as a spectre, but a ‘real’ space solidifying within the nation.

The territorialisation of the ‘inner city’ (1970s–1980s)

If the immediate postwar period represented the ‘minoritisation’ of space, the 1970s and 1980s can be seen as marking the ‘territorialisation’ (Knowles 2003) of the ‘inner city’ as a deeply problematic space *of and for* heightened institutional regulation. This period witnessed a shift in political concern from ‘a preoccupation with immigration ... towards a concern with the development of the black communities already settled in the UK’. Within these discourses, ‘inner cities’ were cast as the, ‘spaces of production of an internal enemy who were not born overseas, but in many cases born and bred in Brixton, Hackney, Tottenham, Moss Side, Toxteth and other urban localities’ (Solomos 1988, 43). The ‘inner city’ mutated from a potential threat to the ‘nation’ to be guarded against through immigration controls and assimilationist policies, to something internal to and inexpugnable from, the body politic – particularly during and following the riots of the early-1980s. Political discourses of the era were, ‘dominated by the symbolic weight of the distressed, black inner city’ (Millington 2011, 97).

This territorialisation was shaped by significant economic and political shifts, which disproportionately impacted upon ‘inner cities’. Deindustrialisation and the move towards a service-based economy exacerbated existing racialised inequalities in labour and housing markets. Between 1961 and 1971, for instance, inner Liverpool lost 34,000 jobs, with Manchester losing 84,000 and London 243,000 (Matthews 1991, 7). It increased during the 1970s as economic restructuring further decimated the nation’s industrial base. By the mid-1970s, 1.3 million fewer people were employed in manufacturing in Britain than had been a decade earlier – a decline of over 15% (Rees and Lambert 1985, 41). At the same time, suburbanisation hollowed out the ‘inner city’. Between 1961 and 1981, inner London, lost almost one million people, with inner areas of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle also losing population (Matthews 1991, 7). ‘Inner cities’ were increasingly characterised by high rates of poverty, blight and related social ills, and provided home to larger black minority populations (Millington 2011).

The fate of urban centres became central to the articulation of a ‘crisis’ period, as the political, economic and demographic became imaginatively aligned (Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. [1978] 2013). As Solomos observes, the ‘inner city’ and related black presence, ‘provided a fertile ground for the racialisation of issues such as employment, housing, education, urban policy and law and order’ (1988, 44). The political elaboration of ‘race’ – through the prism of the ‘inner city’ – integrated these various elements, meaning that,

'Race could be used systematically to conjure up the urban crisis' (Keith 1993, 249). This carried significant political currency and was central to the emergent ideologies of the New Right, as a crisis of politics and of capitalism could play upon – and find symbolic resolution through – popular concerns about 'race', culture and immigration (Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. [1978] 2013; Millington 2011).

During the 1970s, crime became central within the articulation of this crisis as concerns about the nation converged through a symbolic assemblage of 'blackness', 'crime' and the 'inner city' (Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. [1978] 2013; Keith 1993). This helped popularise an

image of inner city areas becoming black enclaves where 'British' law and order could not be easily enforced ... The very presence of black communities was seen as a potential or real threat to the 'way of life' and culture of white citizens. (Solomos 1988, 43)

By the end of the 1960s, associations were already being made between black communities and crime, particularly violent crime, but this increased during the 1970s (Gilroy 1987; Solomos 1988). Central within this was the 'moral panic' that emerged around 'mugging' between 1972 and 1976 (Hall et al. [1978] 2013). Again drawing on the imagery of the American 'ghetto', mugging was constructed as a street crime with roots in the 'culture' of alienated, urban black youth. As Hall et al. demonstrate, the 'mugging' crisis, grounded in the 'inner city', became central to government attempts to reassert political authority through the institution of a 'law-and-order' society as necessary for the defence of nation and civility. The New Right mobilised this particularly fruitfully, with the 'inner city' offering a powerful terrain for rightist and more authoritarian governance (Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. [1978] 2013). During the 1970s, the image of the 'lone mugger' evolved into fears of the 'black mob' or 'gang' shaped by the emergence of a radical, black political consciousness and increased antagonisms between black communities and the police, notably at the Notting Hill Carnival in 1976 and 1977, in Lewisham in 1977 and Southall in 1979. Concerns fixated in particular on black Caribbean youth. The category 'black' had subsumed 'immigrants' and subsequent generations of people with roots in Africa, the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent; however, the perceived dangers referenced by this wide categorisation varied. While those from the Indian subcontinent were criminalised with recourse to religious practice, illegal immigration and fraudulent offences, Black Caribbean youth were deemed especially dangerous with an emphasis on violent crime and rioting. This was particularly the case with the growing associations with the Black Power movement and Rastafarianism, seeing them cast as a politically alienated 'threat' (Gilroy 1987; Solomos 1988).

The result was that black 'inner city' spaces – particularly those associated with black Caribbean communities – 'became both the iconic focus of racialized meaning and the particular sites of techniques of police operations' (Keith 2005, 78), translating the 'inner city' from a subject *for* to a spatial unit *of* governance. As Knowles argues, such institutional policies, converted neighbourhoods such as Brixton and Toxteth into 'territories', as black urban 'inner cities' became the 'front line' in new contestations between the state, the police and black communities (2003, 91; see also Keith 1993). Growing antagonisms also resulted from the way in which 'inner city' spaces became key spaces for the articulation and assertion of African-Caribbean and South Asian communities, who constructed their own social and material infrastructures. The 'inner city' then became a site for the exercise of state racism but also its active resistance, evident for instance in the formation

of self-defence groups against far-right racist incursions and vibrant cultural forms (Gilroy 1987; Millington 2011).

This territorialisation reached its socio-political crescendo in the events leading to – and dominant political discourses emerging out of – the 1980–1981 and 1985 riots in Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and London. In many ways, these events can be seen as an outcome of the increasingly intense and spatially concentrated policing of the ‘inner city’, which compounded by acute social and economic deprivation, sparked unrest. This was perhaps most apparent in Brixton in 1981 where excessive uses of stop and search powers – exemplified by the police operation Swamp 81 – saw intense forms of police surveillance and harassment. At the same time, the apparent institutional neglect shown to the victims of the Deptford fire cemented a view of an uncaring police force opposed to the interests of black populations. Similarly, the riots on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham in 1985 were also precipitated by police incursions into the community.

It was not simply the events of 1980–1981 and 1985, however, but their narration that reflects the increasing ‘territorialisation’ of the inner city, solidifying this space as a political problem (Mavrommatis 2010, 564). While those on the political Left used the disturbances to highlight intense political and economic dislocation in these areas, they failed to significantly destabilise or dislodge dominant articulations emphasising the cultural deficiencies of ‘black’ inner city residents. Even where racial discrimination and disadvantage were acknowledged, such as within Lord Scarman’s (1981) report into the Brixton riots, it was the interaction of these structural forces with the distinct ‘cultures’ of inner city residents – evidenced in the ‘pathological black family’ – that were identified as central (Gilroy 1987; Solomos 1988). Here, imputed cultural otherness assumed more of the explanatory weight, as it was not structured exclusion but principally its interaction with ‘cultural difference’ expressed via criminality that defined the ‘problem’ of the ‘inner city’. As evidenced in the infamous quote by the Conservative minister Douglas Hurd in the wake of the 1985 riots, the events were framed as, ‘a cry for loot and not a cry for help’ (cited in Solomos 1988, 206). The wider historical and political production of ‘inner city’ conditions, and the presence of a multiracial coalition of ‘rioters’ were written out of an account entrenching notions of ‘black’ criminality and the threat posed to law and order and the nation itself (Gilroy 1987; Solomos 1988).

What emerged was a limited and limiting understanding of events whereby, ‘By 1982, the “black” inner city symbolised a crisis of public order ... the themes “race”, “riot” and “inner city” had become inextricably linked’ (Smith 1989, 132). The ‘inner city’ became central to a re-articulation of state power and increasing policy intervention, and in 1985 Thatcher promised to ‘do something about those inner cities’ (Keith 2005, 86). As Smith argues, the spatial fix provided by the ‘inner city’ was

important in legitimising the political management of Britain’s urban crisis. Once these broader socio-economic problems, encapsulated in the declining inner cities, had been cast as socially and spatially discrete and essentially technical race-related problems, they were amenable to management through a variety of short-term panaceas rather than through any more fundamental realignment of mainstream policy (1993, 136).

Prior to the riots, urban policy had demonstrated a significant interest in ‘inner cities’, following the implementation of the Urban Programme in 1968, with resources targeted to

specific areas of urban deprivation. However, as the 1970s progressed, and the urban crisis persisted, it became clear such approaches were exerting little impact (Harding and Nevin 2015, 9). In 1977, the government White Paper 'Policy for the Inner Cities' employed the 'inner city' for the first time in a headline policy. This was followed by the 1978 Inner Urban Areas Act, which marked, 'A more coordinated response to the rapid evolution of the inner city as a social problem' (Keith 1993, 249). The 1978 Act established 'inner city' partnerships between local authorities and industry, the Department of Environment, and community/voluntary organisations in areas including Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Hackney and Lambeth (Fraser 1996; Rees and Lambert 1985; Smith 1989). It encouraged the stimulation of economic development, land reuse, industrial and commercial improvement areas, and subsidies for businesses locating in inner cities (Rees and Lambert 1985, 140–141). However, Rees and Lambert see these policies as largely ineffective, exerting 'little impact upon the issues of economic structure and change which ... constitute the most fundamental conditions of the "inner-city crisis"' (129). The resources in practice supported regional rather than 'inner city' development, which influenced by private interests, were largely concentrated outside central cities (142). Public spending on urban areas also began to fall, accelerating with the 1979 election of the Conservative government. Estimates suggest that between 1977 and 1990, public investment fell by two-thirds, representing just 0.3% of GDP by 1989–1990 (Harding and Nevin 2015, 6).

The Thatcher administration and its policies towards the 'inner city' reflected the wider New Right emphasis on 'that awkward juxtaposition of neo-liberal economics and neo-conservative authoritarianism' (Smith 1993, 138). This marked an acceleration of the shift from the Fordist-Keynesian model of governance to urban entrepreneurialism and neoliberal policies. The 1977 White Paper pointed to the need for a coordinated, wide-reaching programme of social and environmental reform and for policies to be 'bent towards' inner city areas (Harding and Nevin 2015, 9). However, the Conservative government post-1979 desired instead 'massive reductions in public expenditure and ... the limitation of the powers of inner-city local authorities to spend heavily to alleviate their special needs' (Rees and Lambert 1985, 3). The riots were taken as evidence not only of the dangers posed by the 'inner cities' but the failings of previous urban policies and the excesses of liberal Labour governance. Thatcher's administration granted private interests a much greater role through, 'the harnessing of private-sector initiative to inner-city development'. At the same time, additional priority funding given to authorities with 'major inner city problems' was reversed leading to reduced-income for local authorities (Rees and Lambert 1985, 154–155). The introduction of Urban Development Corporations (1980), Enterprise Zones (1981–1982) and Inner City Task Forces (1986) reflects this reliance on private funding, as development corporations were granted rights to subsidise private development through land acquisition, planning powers and financial incentives such as tax exemptions (156).

This entrepreneurial emphasis continued with the City Challenge (1991) programme, which employed a competitive bidding process encouraging local urban partnerships (of private, public and community actors) to attract funding for regeneration projects (Keith 2005, 76–77). Eleven awards were made including to partnerships in Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Manchester. Fraser shows how the City Challenge programme in Hulme (which neighbours Moss Side) sought to,

transform the social mix of the area; create real employment opportunities by attracting major employers to the area and facilitate 'home grown' industry; and radically overhaul housing provision and enhance the area's connection with the city centre, getting away from the 'ghetto Hulme' mentality.' (1996, 50)

This desire for 'social mix' was a key feature of the City Challenge bids, evident also in the regeneration of Deptford and the London Docklands in the 1990s (Keith 2005, 77). In 1977, the Lambeth Inner Area Study produced by the Department of Environment had already advocated striking a better 'ethnic balance' as a way to alleviate urban problems (Mavrommatis 2010, 564–565). Here the racial and ethnic dissolution of the 'inner city' was identified as necessary to its regeneration.

The decade following the riots saw a radical transformation of the 'inner city' set in motion. For Keith, any commitment to address racialised inequalities disappeared by the 1990s, as the absence of the conflict of the 1980s removed deprivation from the agenda. The Section 11 grant was also largely ended which had been important in channelling resources into the inner city, and standard spending assessments changed, ignoring the specific needs of black and minority ethnic populations (2005, 88). Instead, 'inner cities' were opened up as spaces of private investment, representing a 'new urban frontier' to be conquered through processes of 'revanchism', with an emphasis on the de-territorialisation of the 'inner city' through private development, gentrification and the engineering of social mixture (Harding and Nevin 2015; Smith 1996). The material and symbolic (racialised) denigration of the 'inner city' provided the impetus for its reclamation (Keith 2005; Millington 2011).

Fragmenting the 'inner city' (1990s–onwards)

The 'inner city' of the early-1980s, while resonating into the present, lacks its former symbolic significance. Recent decades have seen a dramatic reorientation evident in London but also Bristol and Leeds. Even Moss Side in Manchester, where a spate of gun violence in the late-1980s and early-1990s encouraged comparisons with the Bronx and South Central Los Angeles (Fraser 1996, 55), has more recently seen its negative reputation lessen somewhat. In 2009 Conservative MP Chris Grayling compared Moss Side to Baltimore, while revealing the enduring political saliency of the 'inner city' the widespread rejection of such claims was also notable, with the relative lack of gun violence, and the absence of residential segregation or depths of US poverty cited to reject Grayling's assertions. Since the early-1990s, the 'inner city' and its symbolic affinity with the American 'ghetto' have diminished. This has been shaped by a number of wider developments transforming the 'inner city', symptomatic of the changing spatialities of 'race' and ethnicity and racialised anxieties.

If the response to the 1980s' riots was to regenerate 'inner city' areas through public-private partnerships and urban entrepreneurialism, these policies continued as New Labour advanced a concerted strategy of culture-led urban regeneration. In recent decades, 'inner cities' have been revalorised as desirable sites for capital, residence, and consumption reflective of, 'The change from seeing the inner city as a place of poverty to a potential engine of growth' (Jones 2013, 51). The 'inner city' has been remade as, 'Global elites and the middle classes have apparently rediscovered city living, and they predominantly, but not exclusively have "remade" the inner city in their own image'

(Millington 2011, 108). Investment, property speculation, welfare cuts, and large-scale gentrification, and newer migrations, have all reconfigured the racial demography of 'inner cities' (Butler and Robson 2003; Millington 2011). While this has been most pronounced in the 'global city' of London, it has shaped inner-city areas elsewhere. In St. Paul's in Bristol, Slater and Anderson (2011) document how the area's stigmatisation as a 'reputational ghetto', rationalised a suite of policy interventions promoting social mix through gentrification. More widely such processes have, 'contributed to the growing inhospitality of the city for minority "racial" and ethnic groups, the poor and homeless' (Millington 2011, 108). The diminishing of social housing and affordable private accommodation has seen the 'inner city' as traditionally conceived, fragment into 'problem estates' rather than broader 'problem areas' (Millington 2011).

The re-engineering of 'inner city' spaces has also involved a representational reappraisal. Within the urban regeneration of the 1990s, notions of racial and ethnic 'diversity' (particularly in commodified form) became central to the branding of urban areas as dynamic, exciting and edgy, as more politicised discourses of 'race' were supplanted by the more positive and often depoliticised terms of 'ethnicity' and 'diversity' (Keith 2005; Mavrommatis 2010). This has involved a process wherein, 'Reconceptualising diversity as a virtue has been part of reimagining it as a capitalist asset' (Jones 2013, 53). In the 1990s 'United Colours of Brixton' campaign, 'forms of inner-city ethnic concentration were transformed from causes of concern to causes of celebration differences became viewed as local assets to be capitalised upon' (Mavrommatis 2010, 571). Keith too identifies a trend whereby 'cultural policy and urban planning ... seek to harmonise economic development with social and aesthetic improvements based on the valorisation of "difference"' (2005, 122). Urban regimes in places such as Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester have marketed cities around more open and progressive sensibilities. This was particularly evident within the London 2012 Olympics, where the 'diversity' of London was celebrated as emblematic of the modern nation and the 'global city' (Jones 2013). Here, the nexus of cultural intermediaries, gentrifiers, capital, and housing and commercial developers have remade 'inner city' areas like Brixton, Hulme and St. Paul's through processes both organic and state engineered.

These physical and symbolic processes, along with shifting geographies of race and ethnicity, have destabilised the 'inner city' as an organising device for the contemporary politics of 'race'. The 'dispersal' of refugees and asylum-seekers across the country, the migration of large numbers of Eastern Europeans and their settlement in more provincial places, growing 'superdiversity', as well as the suburbanisation of sections of established black and minority ethnic groups are part of a re-spatialisation of racialised geographies as more peripheral regions are increasingly racially and ethnically diverse (Burdsey 2016; Millington 2011; Neal et al. 2013). Such spaces are 'emerging as unlikely meeting points for new immigrants seeking access to the city and also as places of dwelling for groups- often old immigrants- priced out of the city'. These 'dislocated and often fractious sites comprise the "outer-inner-city"', described by Millington as 'an ideal-typical urban formation ... that proposes to capture cross-cutting transformations in immigration, settlement patterns, racial politics' (2011, 182).

This does not mean the 'inner city' has ceased to function as a key site for racial politics, evident in on-going concerns regarding gun and knife crime, gangs, and punitive policing practices, racialised inequalities and systemic exclusions. However, there have been

marked shifts in the spatialities of 'race' and ethnicity. This was signalled with the 2001 riots in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham, when whites, South Asian Muslims and the police clashed in the context of acute deprivation, far right mobilisation and longstanding racialised antagonisms. Occurring as they did away from metropolitan centres the riots were, 'emblematic of changing popular discourses about race and ethnicity in Britain' (Alexander 2004, 527). Following the Rushdie affair in the late-1980s, and disturbances in the mid-1990s in places such as Luton, Southall and Bradford, there has been an increasing emphasis within the politics of 'race' upon the Asian/Muslim population and the existence of a 'Muslim underclass' (Alexander 2004; Keith 2005). During this period, young Asian/Muslim men in particular are subject to criminalising discourses historically focused upon black Caribbean men. Keith notes that in London's East End, the purported 'criminality' of young Bengali men revealed how, 'The racialised subject of criminality can envelop British "Asian" communities as well' (2005, 94). Such views have intensified in the wake of the 2001 riots and the 2005 London bombings, with the association between Muslims and terrorism, and the rise of Islamophobia nationally and globally.

The shift in the discourses of race and ethnicity has been accompanied by a re-spatialisation. Alexander (2002) notes that within the fracturing of the political category 'black' and the emergence of 'new ethnicities', 'black' Caribbean urban cultures have often been endowed within popular and academic discourses with a progressive, hybrid quality, in keeping with marketable urban cosmopolitanisms. By contrast, Asian/Muslim communities have been cast as inward, static and communitarian. This seems to have a spatial translation as the shift from concerns forged around an all-encompassing notion of 'blackness' to those pertaining to 'Muslimness', has involved a re-spatialisation of anxieties away from urban sites associated with dynamic 'black cultures' to those associated with 'Muslim communities' which also display particularly acute forms of social and economic disadvantage. This has challenged the symbolic and political centrality of the 'inner city'. Following the 2001 riots, while the Cattle Report referred to the depth of 'physical segregation of housing estates and inner city areas' (2001, 9), the 'inner city' did not feature prominently within subsequent discourses. Alexander observes how within accounts responding to both the 1980s and 2001 riots, 'The notion of racial/ethnic/cultural segregation runs clearly through these accounts (ghettos, no-go areas, outsider/insiders) and is seamlessly fused with images of dysfunction and social breakdown (drugs, gangs, violence)' (2004, 530). However, the 'inner city' is not implicated in the same way, and it is more peripheral, post-industrial territories that provide the spatial mooring for many contemporary concerns. Webster argues that in such locations there exist, 'perceptions of ethnic difference that are less amorphous, more visible, striking and contrasting than are found in larger more multicultural cities' (2003 p.102). Recently, this is also evident in relation to 'grooming', where it was Rotherham, Rochdale and Derby that represent national territories of racialised concern in addition to, and often more so, than traditional 'inner city' areas.

The re-spatialisation of racialised anxieties is also reflected in concerns around particular 'degenerate', 'marginal' forms of whiteness. White 'sink estates' and smaller, deprived post-industrial towns such as Stoke-on-Trent have increasingly become associated with poverty, dysfunction and racist political mobilisation, which has increased in the wake of Brexit. This has contributed to a view of such places as

‘unmappable “Badlands” fostering right-wing extremism and majoritarianism’ (Millington 2011, 202). As Millington states, ‘outer-inner-city’ areas suffer from a ‘racialised territorial stigma ... noticeable because the wrong kind of whiteness is also invoked as a mark of shame’ (203). Media and political attention upon these areas, ‘is usually to point to the deficiencies of racist whites or to the perceived terrorist threat lurking in the concealed recesses of the far-metropolis’ (204). Both diversities within conceptions of whiteness and the proliferation of racial and ethnic diversity have weakened the ability of the ‘inner city’ to speak to and stand in for the growing complexity of the nation’s race-space politics.

The shifting cartographies of racialised anxieties, and the inability of the traditionally conceived ‘inner city’ to contain them, were illustrated in the 2011 riots. Triggered by the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham, the disturbances that followed revealed continuities in the spatial politics of ‘race’ through enduring racialised inequalities, ongoing criminalisation and institutional antagonisms, in which young, black, urban men remain archetypal racialised ‘subjects’. However, the spatial diversity of the disturbances, occurring ‘in unracialised or only selectively racialised geographies’, as well as the ‘super-diverse’ nature of the participants reflected the fragmentation of racial and spatial certainties (Murji and Neal 2011, 2.8). As Murji and Neal comment, ‘the social and spatial complexity of cultural difference and ethnic diversity in England militates against those older and totalizing race discourses’ (2011, 2.9), captured within previous iterations of the ‘inner city’. The events of 2011 and the responses to them highlighted both ‘the familiar racisms of threatening and disorderly “other” populations as well as newer complications that the super-diversity of the current formations of multiculturalism in England throw up’ (4.3). Indeed, in comparison to the riots of the early-1980s, in which ‘black, became *the* co-ordinate that the ... urban unrest was positioned and explained through’, in 2011 ‘race’ was much more ambiguously invoked (2.9).

The inability of the ‘inner city’ to epistemologically contain the 2011 riots points to its growing ‘symbolic marginality’. One of the defining features of the riots was that ‘there was no front line and these were not “inner city” riots’. In contrast, ‘Brixton 81 was a centred disturbance characterised by, what now seems like relative socio-spatial-historical clarity’. (Millington 2012a, 4.1–4.2). The shifting terrains of racial politics have reduced the symbolic saliency and intelligibility of the ‘inner city’. This has important political consequences as while the ‘inner city’ has operated as a site of exclusion it has also represented a site for political contestations against racism and racialised inequality (Millington 2011, 2012a). In this sense, the fragmentation of the ‘inner city’ can also be seen as a part of what has been identified as the ‘post-racial’ and/or the ‘post-political’ city. Millington argues that, ‘the displacement of racial conflict away from the cosmopolitan central city makes it easier for the global city to be imagined as “post-race”, free of conflict and at ease with itself’ (2011, 205). Jones too observes how, at a time when ‘cohesion’ and ‘integration’ are seen as key to resolving the nation’s ‘racial question’ policy-makers in places such as Hackney often promote, ‘an ideal of unproblematic community cohesion in super-diverse inner-city areas rehabilitated from the image of fear and danger to one of desirable, successful multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism’ (2013, 51; Harries et al. 2018). By contrast, locations such as Oldham struggle to manage reputations casting them as spaces of racism and racialised dysfunction and conflict (Jones 2013). This ignores persistent and obdurate racialised exclusions and

inequalities within, as well as outside, metropolitan centres. Compounding this de-politicisation for Millington is his observation that the ‘outer-inner-city’ lacks the same political capital as, ‘the imperceptibility of these sites from the centres of decision-making, suggests that racism here will not receive the same scrutiny’. Here, ‘centrality matters, especially in terms of its social, political and cultural effects’ (2011, 206). In this sense, the term ‘outer-inner-city’ might be somewhat misleading as the spatial fragmentation of racialised concerns resemble not a spatial transposing of the ‘inner city’ to elsewhere but rather its relative political dissolution.

The decentralisation of the spatialities of race and ethnicity and the fragmentation of the ‘inner city’ also suggest the emergence of a distinct political imagination. Concern has increasingly focused beyond its confines, and it is often more peripheral areas deemed most in need of policy intervention. It was telling, for instance, that the Casey Review (2016), which investigated ‘integration’, made no reference to the ‘inner city’, unthinkable in such a policy document in previous decades. This, in part, reflects a re-mapping of political anxieties. In 2016, the government announced plans to divest educational resources from metropolitan areas, including ‘inner cities’, to more outlying areas focusing on deprived post-industrial and rural areas. So too, a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation into economic decline highlighted the acute and specific economic challenges facing cities and towns outside of the South East and large metropolitan centres. The report listed those suffering the most severe patterns of decline as places such as Rochdale, Burnley, Hull, Bradford and Stoke (Pike et al. 2016). The spatial fix once afforded by the ‘inner city’ for an amalgam of ‘racial’ concerns has been compromised as the material and symbolic geographies of ‘race’ and ethnicity have shifted and evolved.

Conclusion

This paper has traced the changing spatialities of race and ethnicity within the postwar nation. It has argued that the social and spatial formation of the ‘inner city’ has been central to the politics of race and ethnicity, operating as an organising schema through which social, economic, political and demographic transformations have been referenced and mediated. The demarcation of the ‘inner city’ as a problematic space has been central to the articulation of national crisis and its ‘racial’ dimensions, and subject to institutional practices, which served to minoritise and territorialise the ‘inner city’. More recently, however, its fragmentation is reflective of newer, more complex spatial formations of race and ethnicity, which cannot be contained or mapped in the same way. Here, the material and symbolic revalorisation of ‘inner city’ areas has remade these spaces. While they remain sites of racism, racialised inequality and antagonism, within the political imagination new race-spaces have emerged as ‘the front lines of urban and “racial” politics in England have been rearranged’ (Millington 2012b, 14). The focus on Asian/Muslim populations, ‘marginal’ forms of whiteness, far right mobilisation, Eastern European immigration and emergent forms of super-diversity have seen political concerns gravitate to wider, often more peripheral settings.

The paper has argued for the centrality of space – both real and imagined – in the formations and reformations of race and ethnicity. Such a view recognises ‘the spatial effects of racial location on the preservation of and transformations in, racist discourse’

(Goldberg 1993, 45). As a result, the particular material and symbolic structuring of spaces such as the 'inner city' represent, 'an active archive of the social processes and social relationships that compose the racial order' (Knowles 2003, 80). This is necessarily an order that engages questions of sociology, geography, history and politics. Indeed, as the introduction to this special issue argues, the complexity of racial and ethnic identities and inequalities and their emplacement requires interdisciplinary approaches that can capture relevant exclusions, temporalities, scales and dynamic constructions of 'race' and ethnicity (Finney et al. 2018). What the periodisation presented above reveals is how ideas of race-space, and the modes of socio-political action that have been associated with them, are shaped by changes in prevailing political, economic and social-cultural formations. The spatialities of race are transformed through demographic patterns, economic and urban restructuring, political projects, and the availability and salience of interpretive cultural and political repertoires through which racial and ethnic diversity is comprehended. Race, ethnicity and space must be seen as mutually constitutive with any account of the politics of 'race' necessarily having to interrogate this imbrication. The task for analysis therefore is to grasp the specific coordinates of these race-spaces in given socio-historical, economic and political moments. With the rise and fall of the 'inner city', we see the emergence of new 'sites' and 'sights' of racial politics (Lipsitz 2011), and it is vital that these are comprehended. They are after all the terrains upon which race, ethnicity and space are continually made and remade through 'race thinking' and 'city talk' (Keith 2005, 26).

In closing, we want to suggest potential avenues for future research: firstly, the periodisation offered might provide a framing for more detailed localised case studies. Specifically, questions remain about how these distinct periods play out at the local level; are the transformations identified here evident within local urban politics and if so, how? What are the specific local political configurations through which the idea of the 'inner city' is formed and has evolved? What are the roles of institutional actors across public-private sectors and policy domains in shaping the material and symbolic formations of the 'inner city'? Fraser's (1996) detailed study of Moss Side and Hulme in Manchester points to the benefits of pursuing a granularity of analysis and local socio-historical case study approach. Local case studies can help to develop understandings of the specific processes and range of actors through which the idea of the 'inner city' has evolved, exposing the periodisation offered to critique and development. Future research might also focus on the cultural forms (music, film, art photography, literature) and everyday agential practices that have shaped transforming conceptions of the 'inner city'. This relates not only to the dialectics between dominant and more democratic conceptions but also to the counter-narratives and histories of the 'inner city' that can be offered. The paper presented here has focused on political discourses emanating from above but much more remains to be discovered about how these articulations are shaped or challenged by media, popular culture and everyday cultural forms (Millington 2011). The paper has attempted to impose some historical order on the transformation of the nation's race-space formations, we hope this can act as a starting point to more detailed, historically informed excavations of the relationships between race and space as the material and symbolic geographies of race and ethnicity continue to evolve.

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